

SHOPPING CENTRES: INCREASING THE LEISURE MIX



Shopping centres are devoting more space to catering and leisure facilities to improve the shopping experience, finds Retail Focus.

Text: Gemma Balmford

Imagine hover boards and flying drones replacing car parks and security guards in shopping centres, with segways transporting people from shop to shop. This could one day be a reality according to pupils at Micklem Primary School, who were invited to takeover the running of the Marlowes shopping centre in Hemel Hempstead as part of a nationwide challenge by the Children's Commissioner to give young people an insight into a career in retail. The Shopping Centre 2116 project invited pupils to imagine how the way we shop today would change in 100 years time.

Getting around the malls will apparently be a lot easier with teleport stations replacing customer lifts, while virtual shop assistants. YouTube shops and interactive 'look before you buy' photo booths in fashion and clothing stores will transform the traditional shopping experience.

'Retail shopping will be more interactive and the line between shopping and socialising will become increasingly blurred,' says Vince Williams, centre director at the Marlowes. 'We are already taking the suggestions of the Micklem pupils on board and building them into our future thinking.'

Today, virtual assistants are already being used in some shopping centres to provide a more immersive, guided retail experience and the importance of leisure facilities continues

Plans: Meadowhall in Sheffield is currently undergoing a £60 million refurbishment. Plans have also been submitted for a £300 million Meadowhall Leisure Hall.

to grow.

'Developers are devoting more space to leisure in new build schemes following the lead of successful schemes such as Grand Central Birmingham,' says John Percy, Cushman & Wakefield's head of shopping centre development consultancy. 'This is an international as well as national trend, and we await some of the new leisure trends that are starting to emerge that will help drive the next generation of customer engagement.'

According to a panel of retailers, owners and developers, who gathered to discuss the shopping centre development pipeline with Revo and Lunson Mitchenall, the larger towns and shopping centres that offer a wide variety of comparison fashion, restaurants and leisure activities that give the customer an entertaining and enjoyable shopping trip are the winners. 'Catering and leisure massively improves the shopping experience, making it more dynamic as people spend more money over greater hours,' says Rick Mai, development director at Land Securities. 'The experiential and social factors cannot be over estimated.' >

UK DEVELOPMENTS

This month, Hammerson's leisure-focused Watermark Westquay is due to open in Southampton, with an extensive list of restaurants and cafes, a Showcase De Lux cinema and a public plaza, designed to host a series of events. The scheme is one of six extensions/redevelopments to open in the UK in the second half of 2016, in addition to four new developments, including most notably Victoria Gate in Leeds and Bond Street in Chelmsford.

'In football parlance, this has been a year of two halves,' says Percy of Cushman & Wakefield. 'After a quiet first six months, we will see schemes completing up and down the country, and 2017 will be busier still.'

According to Cushman & Wakefield's UK Shopping Centre Development Report, new openings and redevelopment of existing UK shopping centres will reach a four-year high in 2017. The largest of the six new developments expected to open next year is The Lexicon Bracknell, which will provide 53,883 sq m of new shopping, dining and leisure. The 68,748 sq m Westfield London extension, anchored by John Lewis, will also open, as well as the fully redeveloped 45,394 sq m Westgate Shopping Centre in Oxford.

The £60 million refurbishment of Meadowhall in Sheffield, which will be split into four different areas, each with a different theme, is also due to complete at the end of 2017.

'Consistent with recent years, the shopping centre development pipeline are predominantly extensions or refurbishments,' says Cushman & Wakefield. The Watermark Westquay extension in Southampton and intu Eldon Square, Newcastle are examples of shopping centre extensions and refurbishments, but also highlight another key trend of increasing leisure mix in shopping centres.'

Looking further ahead, Hammerson and Standard Life Investments have revealed plans for a £1.4 billion redevelopment of Brent Cross Shopping Centre in North London, with possible completion in 2021/2022. The proposed plans include 40 new restaurants, a town square that will become a hub for leisure activities, and a market level that will pay tribute to London's popular foodie heritage.

According to commercial real estate company Colliers International, there is a growing trend for the extension of already successful schemes and augmenting them with a greater leisure offer. This is expected to be the main driver for the delivery of new shopping centre space in the next three to four years.



Clockwise from top: Hammerson and Standard Life Investments have revealed plans for a £1.4 billion redevelopment of Brent Cross Shopping Centre in North London; Victoria Gate opened in Leeds in October; John Lewis anchors the new Bond Street development in Chelmsford; Meadowhall in Sheffield is currently undergoing a £60 million refurbishment; Il Centro in Milan, Italy was named Best New Shopping Centre at MAPIC in November; Pupils at Micklem Primary School predict that hover boards and flying drones will replace car parks and security guards in shopping centres in 100 years time.





EUROPEAN HOTSPOTS

At MAPIC in November, Il Centro in Milan, Italy was named Best New Shopping Centre. The development, designed by architectural firm Design International, opened in April and is now the largest shopping centre in Italy. It was one of the key openings across Europe in the first half of 2016, alongside the Riviera scheme in Moscow and the Avion Söderslätts Handelsområde in Sweden.

In the second half of 2016 and throughout 2017, approximately 8.1 million sq m of new shopping centre space will be added across Europe with operators seeking to add more entertainment elements designed to improve customer experience, according to research from Cushman & Wakefield.

'Property owners are working harder than ever before at understanding changing consumer shopping trends and the needs of modern retailing,' says Cushman & Wakefield. 'They are also responding to the evolving role of shopping centres in communities and this is being reflected in the planning of development projects throughout Europe. Both new construction and redevelopment projects at the larger end of the scale, as well as mixed use schemes, are seeing food and beverage operators and leisure facilities featuring highly, as landlords look to raise footfall, extend dwell time and increase turnover.'

The European Shopping Centre Development Report, published in November, cites London, Bristol, Edinburgh, Barcelona, Munich, Ankara, Istanbul, Sofia and Bucharest as among the top locations in terms of future shopping centre development potential due to a combination of strong macroeconomic fundamentals and low market saturation. **RF**

KEY SCHEMES 2016

VICTORIA GATE, LEEDS

Developer: Hammerson
Design/architecture: Acme
Anchor tenant: John Lewis
Size: 35,400 sq m
Opened: October 2016

BOND STREET, CHELMSFORD

Developer: Aquila
Design/architecture: WCEC
Anchor tenant: John Lewis
Size: 27,871 sq m
Opened: September 2016

WATERMARK WESTQUAY, SOUTHAMPTON

Developer: Hammerson
Design/architecture: Acme / Grant Associates
Anchor tenant: Showcase Cinema de Lux
Size: 17,000 sq m
Opening: December 2016

KEY SCHEMES 2017

THE LEXICON BRACKNELL

Developer: The Bracknell Regeneration Partnership (Legal & General Capital and Schroder UK Real Estate Fund)
Design/architecture: Chapman Taylor, BDP
Anchor tenant: Waitrose, Fenwick
Size: 53,883 sq m
Opening: September 2017

WESTFIELD LONDON EXTENSION

Developer: Westfield
Design/architecture: Allies and Morrison
Anchor tenant: John Lewis
Size: 68,748 sq m
Opening: 2017

WESTGATE SHOPPING CENTRE, OXFORD

Developer: The Westgate Oxford Alliance (Land Securities and The Crown Estate)
Design/architecture: Allies & Morrison Architects, Dixon Jones Architects, Glenn Howells Architects, Panter Hudspith Architects, Gillespies
Anchor tenant: John Lewis
Size: Additional 45,394 sq m (total size 74,700 sq m)
Opening: Autumn 2017

Adapted from the Cushman & Wakefield UK Shopping Centre Development Report H2 2016